

1961 ANNUAL REPORT

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

The Planning Department has completed its sixth year, and the following is a resume of its activities and accomplishments during the past year.

I. URBAN RENEWAL

During 1961, the Planning Department spent considerable time on specific urban renewal projects, or programs associated with urban renewal in the form of lectures, group discussions, or group meetings. Following is a list of the programs worked on by the Department.

A. Church Street Redevelopment Project

Construction on the Church Street Project began in March of 1961 and all construction within the development was completed by December 31, 1961. The Planning Director participated in numerous conferences between the Housing Authority, the redeveloper and the contractor and made many field inspections during construction to obtain the best possible development for the City.

B. Northern Canal Renewal Project

1. Part I of an Application for Loan and

Grant was completed by the Planning Department under a contract with the Lowell Housing Authority. The work completed by the Department under this contract included the following:

- (a) The Urban Renewal Plan
- (b) The Relocation Report
- (c) The Conservation Report
- (d) Project Improvement Report
- (e) Financing Report
- (f) Other reports related to Land Acquisition, Demolition and Disposition.

The Planning Department will receive \$15,200 for this work. The money will be deposited in the City of Lowell General Fund.

2. Part I of the Application has been approved by the Lowell Housing Authority and the Redevelopment Authority and has been forwarded to the Regional Office of Housing and Home Finance Agency in New York. Approval is expected early in 1962. Before the project can enter the execution stage, a public hearing must be held in Lowell and approval must be obtained from the Lowell City Council, the Redevelopment Authority, the Planning Board

and the State Housing Board.

C. Acre General Neighborhood Renewal Plan
Application

An application for \$96,800 in survey and planning funds for the Acre General Neighborhood Renewal Plan was prepared by the Planning Department. This application was approved by the Lowell Redevelopment Authority in November and the City Council in December. The Acre GNRP contains approximately 400 acres of land and is bounded generally on the northeast by the Northern Canal Urban Renewal Project, on the southeast by the Central Business District, on the south by the Pawtucket Canal and the B&M RR and on the northwest by the Merrimack River and the Northern Canal.

D. Hale Street General Neighborhood Renewal Plan
Application

An application for \$91,700 in survey and planning funds for the Hale Street General Neighborhood Renewal Plan has also been prepared by the Planning Department. This area contains approximately 350 acres of land to be studied. Approval of this application was also made by the Redevelopment Authority and the City Council. This area is bounded generally by the Pawtucket Canal, Boston and Maine Railroad Tracks, New York, New

Haven and Hartford Railroad Tracks, Plain Street, Powell Street and School Street.

E. General

Urban Renewal Projects completed, soon to be in execution or presently under study, account for approximately 10.3% of the land area in Lowell. They include more than 50% of the deteriorating and blighted housing within the City.

Because of the federal Area Redevelopment Act, it is to the City's advantage to undertake as many renewal programs as possible, since at the present time the federal share is $\frac{3}{4}$ and the City's share is $\frac{1}{4}$, of which the state will pay $\frac{1}{2}$. Thus while Lowell remains a distressed area, the City's financial share of an urban renewal project is only $\frac{1}{8}$ th the net cost of such a project. Therefore, the Planning Department recommends that the City initiate an application for survey and planning funds for the Back Central Street GNRP early in 1962. The area for General Neighborhood Renewal is bounded generally by the Concord River, Church Street Project, Appleton Street, Boston and Maine Railroad, and Hale's Brook to the Concord River and contains approximately 185 acres and estimated cost of the planning and survey study would be approximately \$80,000. Final plans and

right-of-way alignment for the extension of the Lowell Connector to Church Street can be worked out as part of the G.N.R.P. plan. It is anticipated that the Planning Department would undertake the survey and planning of this GNRP, since private planning consultants would be hired to undertake the planning of the Acre and Hale Street GNRP.

F. Workable Program

Revision of the Workable Program was undertaken by the Department because some of the material compiled during 1960 was outdated. The revised Workable Program was approved by the City Council and was submitted to the Housing and Home Finance Agency, and was approved in August 1961. The approval of this document by H.H.F.A. entitles the City of Lowell to apply for federal funds for urban renewal, public housing and other federally aided programs. It should be pointed out that the City of Lowell must have its Workable Program recertified each year in order that it may retain its eligibility for continuing federal aid. This does not mean just a resubmission of its present program, but rather, the City must show progress in upgrading and revising its codes and ordinances and must show improvement in the various problems that cause blight in the City.

II. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Planning Department devoted a portion of its time helping the Lowell Development and Industrial Commission and New Industrial Plants Foundation in developing maps, charts and other pertinent data in developing both a general plan and specific site plans for the Industrial Park and other industrial areas. During 1961, the Planning Department completed plans with cost estimates for developing approximately 60 acres of land on the east side of the Lowell Connector. The Planning Department also provided additional information and revisions for specific site development in the Industrial Park and a general development plan of the Phoenix Avenue area.

The Planning Department in conjunction with the Law Department and Department of Public Works drafted a new zoning section for the City's Zoning Ordinance creating an Industrial Park District (B-50) outlining the degree of area coverage, parking, setbacks, height, use, and landscaping. This Industrial Park District Ordinance was approved by the City Council.

III. PLANNING BOARD, ZONING AND SUBDIVISION CONTROL

The Planning Director acts as secretary ex-officio to the Lowell Planning Board. The Board

met six times in 1961 and held 5 public hearings on zoning changes as required by law. A total of 9 individual zoning petitions were heard. Three subdivisions were approved by the Board, namely, Arlene Road, Madonna Circle and Windward Road. 73 plots on existing public ways were signed by the Director and the City Engineer stating that approval under subdivision control law was not required. The Planning Board also adopted revisions of the following:

Major Street Plan and Design Standards
Land Use Plan
Recreation Facilities Plan
Community Facilities Plan

IV. U. S. CENSUS REPORT

The Planning Department compiled, tabulated and published census tract material for Lowell and the five surrounding towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Tewksbury and Tyngsboro. This report entitled "Population and Housing Characteristics, 1960" is the first of what the Planning Department hopes to be a series of local census tract publications. It is expected that as soon as time permits, a street directory according to census tracts will be published. The third report which should be undertaken in

1962 will present the employment characteristics of the Lowell Standard Metropolitan Area by census tracts. The Planning Director is a "key person" for the U. S. Bureau of Census.

V. OVERALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

On June 9, 1961, Luther H. Hodges, Secretary of Commerce announced that Lowell had been designated an area of chronic unemployment and thus eligible to apply for loans and grants under the Area Re-development Act. In order to qualify, an Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP) had to be submitted. The Planning Department prepared and printed a preliminary OEDP in accordance with federal standards. This preliminary report covered Lowell and the five SMA Towns and was a summary of the factors basic to economic growth. It outlined the economic potentials of the area with respect to resources, markets, and labor skills, and outlined a program of action for creating new employment opportunities or otherwise reducing unemployment and underemployment. The report was not only beneficial to Lowell (making it eligible for increased federal loans and grants) but at the same time it made the five surrounding towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Tewksbury and Tyngsboro eligible for the same benefits. The Planning Department has

prepared and forwarded an application to the Area Redevelopment Administration for a grant of \$140,700 for developing approximately 60 acres of land on the east side of the Lowell Connector in Industrial Park with roads and the necessary utilities. This application was approved in December by the Lowell City Council.

VI. COORDINATION WITH CIVIC GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

The Planning Director and staff worked with the following groups and committees during the past year in the preparation of maps, charts, data and reports as required to properly assist these groups:

1. Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce
2. Lowell Advisory Parking Commission
3. Lowell Incinerator Commission
4. League of Women Voters
5. Greater Lowell Economic and Development Committee
6. Greater Lowell Area Planning and Development Committee
7. Lowell Redevelopment Authority
8. Lowell Housing Authority
9. Greater Lowell Technical Committee on Training
10. Lowell Community Council

In addition to working with the above groups, the Planning Department prepared plans and reports

or revised plans on the following general subjects:

1. Exterior design of Water Filtration Plant
2. School Population Prediction 1961-1965
3. Revisions of Land Use Plan
4. Revision and design standards of Major Street Plan
5. Design standards and Location of Recreational Facilities
6. Preliminary Capital Improvements Program 1962-1966
7. Ideal Neighborhood Design Plan for Outer Pawtucketville
8. Revision of City of Lowell Zoning Map
9. Design of Playfield, Outer Pawtucketville
10. Revision of Subdivision Regulations
11. Assisted from time to time 495 Association.

STAFF

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